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***Science and Technology  
ST Policy on Document Preparation and Clearance***

***NMFS POLICIES ON SCIENTIFIC OR TECHNICAL PUBLICATIONS***

**NOTICE:** This publication is available at: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/directives/>.

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***SUMMARY OF REVISIONS:*** Section 4.3 was amended to include a new Section 4.3.1 addressing compliance with the Information Quality Act. Existing Sections 4.3.1 and 4.3.2 were re-numbered 4.3.2 and 4.3.3 respectively. Additional minor corrections were made to sections 3.1.1, 3.2.5, and 3.3.

/S/

21 Dec 2005

Signed \_\_\_\_\_  
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National Marine Fisheries Service

**Policies on Scientific and Technical Publications**

*March 1999*

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**1.0 BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE**

NOAA'S National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) and its predecessor organizations have been

the focal point for research on living marine resources of interest to the United States for more than 120 years. Beginning with its first annual scientific report for the year 1871, published in 1873, it has continuously published information and research findings of the highest quality. Resulting contributions to the scientific literature number many thousands and are available in a broad range of publications which have been distributed worldwide since the origin of the agency.

This document establishes publishing policy guidelines to ensure that NMFS fulfills its mandate to make the results of its scientific investigations available in a timely manner, that the highest levels of quality are maintained, and that they are distributed effectively and can be readily accessed. Therefore, NMFS is guided by the principles outlined herein.

## **2.0 PUBLICATIONS**

NMFS publishes several formal publications as the final step in its research programs. The formal publications receive varying levels of internal and/or external reviews, and they include the peer-reviewed journal *Fishery Bulletin* (FB) and its associated NOAA Technical Report NMFS series (TR), the peer-reviewed journal *Marine Fisheries Review* (MFR), and the NOAA Technical Memorandum NMFS (TM) series.

### **2.1 Peer-reviewed Publications**

#### **2.1.1 *Fishery Bulletin***

The quarterly *Fishery Bulletin* (FB) is the oldest and one of the finest fisheries science journals in the world. It is the U.S. counterpart to other highly regarded governmental fisheries science publications. It publishes original research or interpretative articles in all scientific fields that bear on marine fisheries and marine mammal science. NMFS staff are encouraged to use this journal as their principle publication outlet for original research findings and technical notes.

#### **2.1.2 NOAA Technical Report NMFS**

The NOAA Technical Report NMFS (TR) of the *Fishery Bulletin* provides a flexible outlet for publishing a variety of high quality manuscripts which, owing to length or other reasons are inappropriate for the FB, such as keys, comprehensive lengthy manuscripts, FAO species synopses, Flora and Fauna subseries manuscripts, etc. The manuscripts published are equal in quality to *Fishery Bulletin* articles and undergo the same rigorous peer-review process.

The TR series is not used for annotated bibliographies, lengthy data sets, or computer programs. Such materials may be more appropriately published in the TM series or perhaps in microfiche or electronic form.

#### **2.1.3 *Marine Fisheries Review***

The *Marine Fisheries Review* (MFR), also a quarterly journal, publishes review articles, research reports, significant progress reports, technical notes, and news articles on fisheries science, engineering and economics, commercial and recreational fisheries, marine mammal studies, aquaculture, and U.S. and foreign fisheries developments. Emphasis, however, is on in-depth review articles and practical or applied aspects of marine fisheries rather than pure research.

### **2.2 Non Peer-reviewed Publication**

### **2.2.1 NOAA Technical Memorandum NMFS**

The NOAA Technical Memorandum NMFS series (TM) is published by NMFS Offices and Science Centers, and it is used for timely documentation and communication of preliminary results, interim reports, or more localized or special-purpose information that may not have received formal outside peer reviews or detailed editing. Science Centers and Offices are responsible for reviews and technical accuracy of TM's. The TM's are numbered by their issuing organization and can be cited in the literature. For the latter reason, and because the TM's are readily available through the National Technical Information Service (NTIS), the series should not be used if an author wants to seek publication of his or her manuscript later in a peer-reviewed journal or report series. Instead, the Administrative, Laboratory, or Processed Report designation should be used (see 2.3 below).

## **2.3 NMFS Informal Documents**

### **2.3.1 Administrative or Laboratory Reports**

In addition to the TM series, NMFS Science Centers and Offices utilize another type of document. These items are referred to as Administrative, Laboratory, Contract, Saltonstall-Kennedy, or Processed Reports. These documents serve a very specific purpose and contain material that is generally:

- A. For internal Center/Laboratory/Region purposes only or for preliminary reviews needed by Fisheries Management Councils or their committees.
- B. On file only at the respective Centers/Laboratories/Regions.
- C. Produced in less than about 100 copies and not widely distributed. If mentioned in a paper, they should be footnoted as either an unpublished ms. or data on file at...
- D. Carry the disclaimer that "This document does not constitute a formal publication and is for information only. Its contents should not be formally cited or reproduced."
- E. Produced only as xerographic copies.
- F. Numbered for internal filing and retrieval.
- G. Self-covered.
- H. Not written or printed in a form which would make them appear similar to a TM, TR, or other peer-reviewed literature.

### **2.3.2 Periodical Reports and Newsletters**

These documents include quarterly, bimonthly, or annual reports and newsletters. They are produced at the discretion of the various Science Center and Office Directors and are generally used to transmit information to the public and specific constituents of the agency. When published for external dissemination, they must conform to standard DOC, NOAA, and NMFS publication policies and guidelines. Materials in these reports are generally prepared and presented in more of a news style or format.

Authors and editors of these materials must exercise care and judgment in preparation of these documents so that future publication of the scientific research in a peer-reviewed journal is not jeopardized. These reports or newsletters should carry the disclaimer that "This report (or newsletter) does not constitute a formal publication and is for information only. Its contents

should not be formally cited or reproduced.”

### **2.3.3 Data for Regulatory Use**

Appropriate data and results from ongoing research needed by regulatory groups (e.g., Fishery Management Councils, etc.) are supplied to them by appropriate NMFS Centers or Offices. Given the special relationship between NMFS science and these regulatory groups, provision of such material will not jeopardize later publication. However, such reports or documents should clearly state that they are limited in distribution, are for discussion or administrative or regulatory use only, and are not to be cited in formal literature. For later formal publication it may be necessary to rewrite, augment, reanalyze, or condense such material. Authors of such manuscripts must inform the editor to whom the manuscript is submitted for formal publication whether or not the manuscript has been previously published or disseminated, in whole or in part.

### **2.4 Electronic Publishing**

New electronic media and directives for using them are being developed by the Government Printing Office (GPO), NOAA, and other Federal agencies. NMFS will coordinate with the appropriate Federal agencies (in the Department of Commerce, GPO, Depository Library System, etc.) to produce and disseminate appropriate data in electronic form as needed.

NMFS also encourages exploration of electronic forms of dissemination of its formally published research, including appropriate lengthy data sets, laboratory or field keys of fishes or fish larvae, extensive bibliographic data, and other lengthy scientific and technical materials that lend themselves to electronic storage and dissemination.

### **2.5 Microfiche**

NMFS endorses the use of microfiche, generated either through GPO contract or via NTIS, for such publications or dissemination as appropriate (i.e., for “publishing” excessively long (250+ pages) reports or data sets or for mailing formal or informal NMFS publications to foreign publication exchange partners).

## **3.0 NMFS SCIENTIFIC PUBLISHING**

### **3.1 Publications Advisory Committee (PAC)**

The NOAA Assistant Administrator for Fisheries (AA) established the NMFS Publications Advisory Committee (PAC) in January 1981 which succeeded the NMFS Publications Policy Review Board.

#### **3.1.1 PAC Membership**

Membership of the PAC includes at least one representative from each of the six regional Science Centers (usually each Center's former FB-TR Scientific Editor), the current NMFS Scientific Editor, and the MFR Editor, and is chaired by a staff member of the Office of Science and Technology (F/ST). The NMFS Scientific Publications Office (SPO) Chief acts as Secretary of the PAC and coordinates PAC communications and annual meetings, which are convened by the PAC chair. Should a vacancy occur in Center representation, the Science Center Director will

select another representative.

### **3.1.2 PAC Duties**

The PAC reviews NMFS scientific and technical publishing policies and makes recommendations for them to the AA via F/ST. The PAC also reviews and makes recommendations for the establishment or termination of NMFS publication series; for SPO and NMFS Scientific Editor budget, staffing, space, and operations needs; and performs limited editorial oversight as specified in item 5.1.

## **3.2 Scientific Editing**

The position of NMFS Scientific Editor is filled by a scientist affiliated with one of the NMFS Science Centers. That editor, chosen by the respective Center Director, serves for a 3-year period. The position rotates from Center to Center in the following order (by Fiscal Year): NWFSC (1993-95), NEFSC (1996-98), SEFSC (1999-2001), SWFSC (2002-2004), and AFSC (2005-2007). Should a vacancy occur during a Scientific Editor's tenure, the Science Center Director will name a replacement to complete the tenure. The outgoing Scientific Editor will provide assistance to the incoming Scientific Editor to achieve a smooth editorial transition.

### **3.2.1 Editorial Autonomy**

NMFS Scientific Editors have the autonomy expected and required by an editor of any formal scientific publication. The editor's decisions are final and are not subject to being overruled by NMFS or any Federal entity, except as may be required by law. Issues or allegations of professional misconduct, however, are reviewed and adjudicated by the PAC as described in section 5.1.

### **3.2.2 Editorial Committee**

The Scientific Editor is responsible for appointing an Editorial Committee to advise in the peer review process and on other editorial matters for the FB and TR series. Membership on the Editorial Committee is not restricted to Federal employees and its size and composition are at the discretion of the Scientific Editor.

### **3.2.3 Peer Reviews**

The NMFS Scientific Editor is responsible for conducting peer reviews of and for accepting or rejecting manuscripts for the *Fishery Bulletin* and Technical Reports.

### **3.2.4 Scientific Editor Staffing**

The Scientific Editor is assisted by an editorial assistant, chosen either by that editor or via other arrangements worked out between the Scientific Editor and the Center Director. Necessary secretarial support is also arranged through the center.

### **3.2.5 Scientific Editor Office Funding**

Funding for the Scientific Editor's Office is shared by the Scientific Editor's Center and NMFS Headquarters. The Scientific Editor's Center provides an office and office needs, and the

Scientific Editor's salary. NMFS Headquarters provides funding to support a GS-9 full-time salary equivalent assistant, plus \$10K annually for travel support.

### **3.3 NMFS Scientific Publications Office**

The NMFS Scientific Publications Office in Seattle, Wash., is responsible for arranging all aspects of publishing the FB, TR, and MFR. (This does not preclude later electronic posting or dissemination of already published papers by others.) The SPO establishes publication specifications, coordinates and reviews publishing contracts (which by law are handled by GPO), and edits, publishes, and distributes the manuscripts approved by the respective NMFS editors, including the MFR editor who is an SPO staff member. The SPO also monitors compliance with NMFS, NOAA, and DOC publishing regulations.

The SPO is administratively supervised by and reports to the Chief of the Science and Information Division (ST6) under the Office of Science and Technology (F/ST). In addition, the SPO provides technical and administrative editorial support to NMFS headquarters offices, which includes coordinating publication of several series of the NOAA Technical Memoranda NMFS and other special publications. SPO also carries out the mandates of the PAC after concurrence by the AA.

### **3.4 NMFS Offices and Science Centers**

NMFS Offices and Science Centers provide for the informal presentation of administrative, contract, laboratory, and processed reports on research or information of a less permanent nature. Material with more formal editing or reviews is published in their Technical Memorandum (TM) series.

### **3.5 NMFS Scientific Publications Distribution**

The SPO, under GPO, DOC, NOAA, and U.S. Postal Service (USPS) regulations, coordinates the distribution of the NMFS journals and technical reports that it publishes. Actual distribution is made by GPO and by private firms, under GPO contract.

Other NMFS Offices and Science Centers are responsible for the proper distribution of their publications according to DOC, NOAA, and USPS regulations.

### **3.6 NMFS Scientific Publications Exchanges**

The SPO is responsible for maintaining and supporting formal publications exchange agreements with foreign and domestic organizations that publish related scientific and technical publications and information of interest and use to NMFS.

## **4.0 PUBLISHING PRIVILEGES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

Publication is the final act of research, and NMFS is responsible for publishing and disseminating the results of its scientific studies. The process of documenting scientific findings begins with the scientific investigator and ends with publication and distribution.

### **4.1 Publication Privileges**

Formal NMFS scientific and technical publications have the status of scientifically independent journals under control of the appointed editors. No one, within or outside NMFS, receives special consideration for publication privileges in NMFS journals or the TR or TM series. Acceptance for publication is based on merit as evaluated through peer reviews and on the judgment of the respective editors.

## **4.2 Research Documentation**

Each NMFS employee responsible for completing a scientific investigation is also responsible for documenting the results. The form of documentation may vary, but when significant new information of potential interest or value to the scientific community is developed, the individual has the added responsibility of making the findings available through formal publication.

NMFS managers and supervisors are responsible for encouraging formal publication of appropriate scientific findings. Formal NMFS publications may be considered as primary outlets for fishery-related articles written by NMFS employees. Following such consideration, NMFS employees, in concert with their supervisors and Science Center/Office Director, may elect to publish in another appropriate outlet of their choice.

## **4.3 Quality Assurance**

### **4.3.1 Information Quality Act Compliance**

Quality assurance measures shall be conducted in accordance with all applicable information quality guidelines (i.e., NOAA, Department of Commerce and the White House Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Information Quality Guidelines) under the Information Quality Act, including the OMB Information Quality Bulletin for Peer Review (70 FR 2664, Jan. 14, 2005).

### **4.3.2 Technical and Editorial Reviews**

Technical and editorial reviews proceed through several steps, beginning with the author's immediate supervisor. Depending on the practices followed by particular elements of NMFS, the Laboratory, Center, or Office Directors may conduct technical reviews internally and/or externally. Regardless of the process, each Laboratory, Center, or Office Director is responsible for the technical accuracy, policy statements, and editorial quality of manuscripts or memoranda that he or she approves for release and/or publication. The standard NOAA Form 25-700 (or similar document) is used to indicate completion of appropriate Center or Office reviews and to signify final release for publication.

### **4.3.3 Peer Reviews**

Articles submitted for formal NMFS publication above the level of TM must also be reviewed by the designated NMFS Scientific Editors who arrange for scientific or technical peer reviews and supervise full editorial review and oversight.

## **5.0 PUBLISHING ETHICS AND OVERSIGHT**

### **5.1 PAC Editorial Oversight**



PAC oversight of NMFS scientific writing, editing, and publishing is limited to issues of professional misconduct, and does not include issues of editorial discretion or judgment. Allegations of such professional misconduct must be presented to the PAC Chair in writing and with appropriate documentation. The PAC will investigate and, should a majority of its members find that any actions have been grossly inappropriate, will present documented findings and advice to NOAA's Assistant Administrator for Fisheries who has the sole authority for discipline.

## **5.2 Author/Editor Confidentiality**

NMFS Editors are responsible for maintaining the confidentiality of the manuscripts submitted to them, while in their possession.

Reviewers are likewise responsible for maintaining confidentiality of their reviews and of the information reviewed.

If requested by the author, reviews may be double-blind -- that is, neither the author nor the reviewer knows each other's identity -- at the editor's discretion. Generally, however, author's names are not blacked out of the manuscript during the review process. If requested in writing by a reviewer, the Editor may reveal the name of that reviewer, but only to the author involved.

## **5.3 Avoiding Dual Publication**

Dual publication must be avoided. An author is responsible for informing NMFS and non NMFS editors if substantial portions of the material submitted in a manuscript have previously appeared or are likely to appear in any other context (print or electronic), the number of copies produced, and where distribution has been made. Decisions of acceptance, revision, or rejection of the manuscript rest entirely with the publication editor.